



# The Nigerian Society of Engineers

PORT HARCOURT BRANCH

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## Interview with Engr. O. A. Ajibola FNSE on the Raw Material Development in Engineering and Manufacturing in Nigeria.

*E-Newsletter: Please sir give us a brief history about yourself; education, experience and contribution to the Engineering profession.*

**Engr. Ajibola:** Thank you. It's my pleasure to have this interview with you. My name is Engr. O. Ajibola. I graduated in Civil Engineering from the University of London in 1970 and practiced for a while in England before returning to Nigeria in 1973 December. I worked between 1974 January and 1976 with Etteh Aroh and Partners and after that we started our own consulting firm; **Intecon Partnership**. I started the company with my colleagues and since that time to date we are grateful that this company has been involved in many spectacular projects ranging from government based projects to private sector projects and the largest volume of projects we have handled are in the Oil and Gas industries. We have also been in the forefront of developing the profession through professional development activities for members of our staff and also ICT development for the company itself since we work in the Oil and Gas Industry we have to be ICT compliance. We have started this in the middle 80s till now. So our firm operates its own complete ICT system including VISTA and other facilities. We do our drafting in AUTOCAD and our proprietary design programmes. So far so good we have been involved in so many projects for instance; some of the projects in the Oil and Gas include the extension of the GAS facility for Mobil Producing. We also developed their Helipad projects which include the hanger, the Helipad complex as well as the Terminal buildings more or less the entire complex and so on and so forth. We also developed the extension of helipad facility for Chevron when it needed to be extended and strengthened to carry bigger aircrafts. So these are some of the jobs that come to mind. We are involved in structural designs. We have a very strong geotechnical base. We do intensive geotechnical works in the riverine areas, we have equipment and tools to carry this out and we have good patronage from the oil and gas industry.



Engr. O. A. Ajibola, FNSE, Deputy President, NSE

*E-Newsletter: Thank you very much. That's quite a lot of experience. Let's go back to issue we want to discuss raw material development, machinery and manufacturing. What is your opinion in achieving the vision 2020 in the area of raw material development, machinery and manufacturing?*

**Engr. Ajibola:** Well, I thank you for this question. I have my reservation regarding the participation of engineering in raw material development. What we know so far is that we have Raw Material Development Research Institute Zaria, which is a government institution. The joy I have now is that the institution is being headed by an Engineer this time before we heard that it wasn't headed by an engineer. That has been one of the issues that probably may have delayed the rapid development of the raw material development both for design and manufacturing. The institute has been in existence, but the bottlenecks as you are aware are bureaucracy. We should go into advertising the institute to create awareness to the public. Now that's one end of it because from research and development you can go to usage, to manufacturing etc. One of the issues that militate against all these is the fact that there have been no planned and well coordinated information to encourage the use of raw materials that are derived internally in this country. Most times people come with codes and standards for materials that are being imported; we tend to jump at it. I think there is a missing link between research and development and the industry in this regard, this is where the engineers come in. Identifying raw materials, characterising them and the capability to apply their usefulness is another thing. Using the material for design purpose is another thing, so we need the methodology to implement the raw material into finished products and of course methodology include processes, machinery and this are the areas we have not attended to and if we should

move fast to develop into a big economy soon, we must look very closely into these areas and then bridge this gap as soon as possible. That means we must encourage our members to have some units that would be able to use the resources of the raw material development and research institute and make design processes for them to turn them into finished products as well as design machinery to achieve this, perhaps if we are able to achieve this and get investors we would be able to solve 50% of the problem. This is very essential because engineering is about finding solutions to problems and the raw materials that exist in our nation are the easiest materials that can be processed.

*E-Newsletter: Thank you very much. In the area of machinery, with the epileptic behaviour of our steel plants, in your opinion what do you think that can be done to improve production in the steel industry?*

**Engr. Ajibola:** Thank you. I was at the steel summit organised by the Ministry of Power and Steel in 2007 representing NSE and a lot was discussed about the state of the steel industry in Nigeria. A lot of information that came to limelight was that of our inability to have a component coke derivative for the steel plant. It was deliberated that a special coke which could not be obtained, which is not here, we need to import. Anyway in discussion that went on, it was decided that plant design modification is necessary to be able to use our raw material and get it functioned. Apparently what is going on now, the group that is running the place now are using segmented technology, small modules, and they are not actually using the design as it is. But what we told them is that they should buy material, if need be to partner with anybody especially those that help in the development of that plant because a lot of our members were involved in the development of that plant and now they are not working. My suggestion is that they should constitute themselves into the companies and go for any identical aspect of the process and begin to develop. Of course it requires funding and everything but then that is one of the things that I believe that as engineers we are slacking in this direction. They should be able to go out like other business men, source for fund, apply the fund if need be co-opt other people it should not be a perfect engineering situation, you may need bankers, accountants, co-opt them, form a viable company and go for the business. I'm sure that with that, government will even find it easier to adopt such company to carry out with the steel development. There is need for smaller steel company because Ajaokuta and Aladja plants are mega ones but those who know what to do, how to segment it properly, how to make it most productive and how to service it, they are Nigerian who have worked there before.

*E-Newsletter: In the area of the usage of our engineers who have worked there before, what do you think government should do to bring them back bearing in mind that many of them had since been thrown out of jobs and some have found other things to do?*

**Engr. Ajibola:** That area is the one we were talking about. It's no longer going to be government, let's face it here; It's going to be private sector setup where they will come back as entrepreneurs not as workers, they must go and develop as a matter of fact I have met with one of the longest serving engineers there and I had a long chat with him and they have set up a company and they have made the bid for some aspects of the job and they are processing, I am quite impressed with that and again NSE has been a party to the development in the steel industry in recent times, when we had complains from Ajaokuta branch that some members had been discharged from work and discriminated by the Indians that came in, we took it up and set up a committee headed by a revered engineer. The committee took up the

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**Interview with Engr. O. A. Ajibola FNSE on the Raw Material Development in Engineering and Manufacturing in Nigeria.**

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matter very seriously and sincerely and that led to the first concession that was given to Nigerians. With that government has really truncated deal between them and has already proceeded in another format which may have given opportunities to some of our members and I am glad to say that I note the interest of these gentlemen and they are really pursuing it. Apart from this consultancy, I think we also have a consultancy in many disciplines. So NSE is not completely overlooked, but the deals that have come in should have been made over the head of Nigerian Society of Engineers that's why the success was minimal, I agree with you the only thing that government can help us do is to ensure that no deal is made without a structured involvement of a Nigerian engineering company, I mean led by, moved by, driven by proper Nigerian engineering company who have the appropriate knowledge of the industry.

*E-Newsletter: What advice do you have for those of us that are afraid to go into such ventures? That will make us bold to face risk because it's only then that we can achieve success.*

**Engr. Ajibola:** I must tell you, I have implicit confidence in the Nigerian engineers to excel in the engineering profession. I thank God for mine own situation because I took the risk along with my colleagues and I thank God that we took the risk. Today we are designing Highways, Runways, Dock yards and heavy civil engineering projects and so on. It did not come easy, it will never come easy. What we should look at is; is there any alternative(s), what are the alternatives? In the past Nigerian engineers are used to sitting down at home receiving commission as consultant and they go ahead and do the job but those days are over, we have adopted an economy setting that does not allow government to just invest in a project, so it is an opportunity for us, if Nigerian engineers come together, cost of production and everything is less, our involvement is bound to bring cost down and so every member looks at areas he/she can function effectively. We do not need to have mega companies, we can have small companies but we must be focused on what we want, we package what we know how to do and start in a humble manner within a short time we can get up. I am confident that with dedication and determination and with the quality of the senior colleagues we have a lot can be done. The junior colleagues are really versatile, they should combine with senior colleagues, and the senior colleagues have stature while the junior colleagues have knowledge, ICT and Modernization. If they combine, you will see the change.

*E-Newsletter: Thank you very much for the knowledge you have shared with us and the audience you have given us at this Bauchi (Yankari) 2008.*

**NIGERIAN SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS,  
PORT HARCOURT BRANCH  
2009 Programme of Activity**

MONTH	ACTIVITY	DAY/DATE	TIME	VENUE
MARCH	Workshop: The use of Engineering software for analysis and Design AutoCad 2009	Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup> Sat	9am – 5pm	Branch Secretariat
	Symposium: The effect of Corrosion on Engineering facilities & infrastructures	Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup>	5.00pm	Branch Secretariat
APRIL	Technical Evening: Problem in Infrastructural Development in Niger Delta: Roads as case study by Engr. E. I. Anizoba MNSE, Federal Controller of Works	Thursday, 10 <sup>th</sup>	5.00pm	Branch Secretariat
	Piping & Pipeline Training	Mon 18-23 Sat	9am -5.pm	Branch Secretariat
JUNE	W/S: Maintenance of Engineering Infrastructure and Equipment	8 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup>	9.00am	Branch Secretariat
JULY	Technical Evening: Topic: Safety in Engineering	Tuesday, 17 <sup>th</sup>	5.00pm	Branch Secretariat
NOVEMBER	5-Day Workshop: 1. Safety in Engineering 2. Engineering Management, 3. Project Management 4. General Safety	Tuesday, 12 <sup>th</sup> – Thursday, 16 <sup>th</sup>	9.00am Daily	Branch Secretariat

**ENGR. Denis A. A. Dania, MNSE, General Secretary**



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**NOTICE! NOTICE!! NOTICE!!!**

All members of NSE PH should pay their **annual branch dues** of N4000 and **compulsory levy** of N5000 towards the Engineer Resource Center to **UBA ACC. NO: 080208000194 (Port Harcourt main Branch)**. Also pay **National Annual Subscription** of N5,500.00 directly to **AFRIBANK ACC No. 1420202215613** & forward all tellers to the secretariat for reconciliation. All payments should be made at the Bank